Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

EDITORIAL.

The Aim of the American Naturalist. — The thirty-second volume of the *American Naturalist*, which commences with the present number, will be the first entire volume to appear under the new management. It may not, therefore, be inappropriate at this time to state once more the motive which has induced us to assume control of the magazine.

Every enterprise that hopes to be successful must be conducted with some one definite aim in view. From the range of subjects covered by the *Naturalist* it may be supposed by many that the magazine is to be a kind of scrap basket for a miscellaneous lot of articles which, for one reason or another, have failed to find space in the journals of the special sciences to which they rightly belong. This is just what we most earnestly desire to avoid. We wish to select our articles so that the magazine shall have a definite character, with each department working in harmony with all the rest. What, then, is to be the basis of selection? What common point of view shall cement its diverse departments into a harmonious whole?

There was a time, hardly antedating the foundation of this journal, when one man might be equally eminent as a zoologist, a botanist, and a geologist. Many of the most distinguished names in science are borne by men whose activities ranged over all of these broad fields. But the conditions have been so changed by the rapid accumulation of knowledge during the last half-century that in order to attain any success a man must devote his attention to a narrow field; and, instead of becoming naturalists in the broad sense of the term, we see men becoming lepidopterists, coleopterists, ornithologists, embryologists, and the like, devoting their entire attention to one small group of animals or plants, to a narrow line of investigation in morphology or physiology, or studying exclusively some small class of phenomena in geology or mineralogy. Instead of the general scientific journals and societies of natural history of former times, these conditions have called into life and elevated to the highest prominence societies and journals dealing with the special problems of restricted lines of research. Such conditions obtain to-day, and must continue to influence the course of investigation so long as unknown facts remain to be discovered.

But can we not see already the dawn of a new era in natural science, brought about by this very multiplicity of independent researches and vast accumulation of material? Generally speaking, the obvious facts of natural science have been discovered, and investigation is trending away from them toward the deeper, more remote, and more fundamental phenomena. Students following these deeper lines of research sooner or later find themselves on the border where their scientific field touches their neighbor's. The morphologist who seeks to explain the causes of development soon finds himself involved in questions of physiology. Physiologists, on the other hand, in studying the functions of the nervous system, for example, have found it possible to draw important conclusions from data furnished by morphology. The geologist supplies the biologist with information concerning the conditions that have influenced the geographical distribution of organisms, and learns from him in turn what organisms have to teach as to the nature of the environment in which strata have been deposited. And so it is throughout all the related sciences. A good example of this tendency is furnished by the program of the American Morphological Society, which is holding its meeting as we go to press. We notice such titles as the following: "Grafting Experiments upon Lepidoptera," "The Effect of Salt Solutions on Unfertilized Eggs of Arbacea," "Some Activities of the Polar Bodies of Cerebratulus," "The Reaction of Amœba to Light of Different Colors and to Rœntgen Rays." Surely we may expect these papers to contain as much physiology as morphology.

A movement seems to be well under way toward a closer union of the natural sciences based not upon superficial observations and poorly grounded speculations, but upon a deeper insight into the real facts. It is the purpose of the *American Naturalist* to aid and encourage this movement. We desire that our pages afford a common meeting-ground where the morphologist, the physiologist, the zoologist, the botanist, the anthropologist, the palæontologist, the geologist, and the mineralogist may meet to discuss the problems in which they have a common interest. But it is not merely articles dealing in broad generalities that we want. Accounts of the most minute investigations will be cordially welcomed, if only the results are shown to have some significance from our point of view.

Of course, ultimately, all human knowledge is a unit, and no fact lacks significance; but we have no ambition to cover such a field. How, then, shall we define our province?

May it not be possible to regard the earth and its inhabitants as a unit? Then the problem would be to describe the various parts of this unit and to explain their relations to one another. While the solution of this problem is too vast an undertaking for any one man or any generation of men, may it not be legitimate to adopt it as the final purpose of a journal which is intended to represent the great body of naturalists in this country? It seems to us that this is a legitimate ideal of attainment, and one which, if kept steadily in view by editors and contributors, will afford that unity of purpose which is essential to success.

But in order to be truly representative and to attain the highest success, we need the coöperation of every naturalist in America. We are glad of your subscriptions, but we especially desire your contributions. To every one who has anything interesting to say we extend a cordial invitation to use our columns. If the editors are allowed to choose from the best that is produced, they will find no difficulty in issuing a magazine that Americans may be proud to call the *American Naturalist.*